

Message Text

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46

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3661
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
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AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 2555

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS : PINT, TC
SUBJECT : UAE INTERNAL AFFAIRS--PROGRESS REPORT (OR LACK THEREOF)

1. SHAIKH ZAYID'S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE FEDERATION AMONG RULERS SEEMS TO HAVE LOST MOMENTUM FOR TIME BEING. WE HEAR THAT SUPREME COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER 20, AT WHICH SHAIKH RASHID WAS SUPPOSED TO BE PINNED DOWN ABOUT MILITARY UNIFICATION, HAS BEEN POSTPONED, REPORTEDLY AT SHAIKH ZAYID'S REQUEST BECAUSE HE DID NOT WANT YET ANOTHER MEETING OF RULERS TO END WITH PALPABLE LACK OF RESULTS. MAHDI TAJIR TOLD ME ABOUT A WEEK AGO THAT HE THOUGHT COMPROMISE ON MILITARY QUESTION HAD BEEN WORKED OUT BUT THAT HE HAD RECENTLY RETURNED TO FIND IT HAD FALLEN APART OVER SHAIKH ZAYID'S UNWILLINGNESS TO REDUCE SIZE OF ABU DHABI DEFENSE FORCE.

2. TAJIR SEEMS TO HAVE GOOD NEWS/BAD NEWS FEELING ABOUT GENERAL STATE OF AFFAIRS IN UAE. GOOD NEWS IN HIS VIEW IS THAT AS RESULT OF RECENT CONFRONTATION BETWEEN ZAYID AND RASHID OVER INTERNAL AFFAIRS, TWO ARE TALKING MORE DIRECTLY AND FRANKLY WITH EACH OTHER ABOUT THE ISSUES. TAJIR BELIEVES THIS HAS BEEN ONE OF UAE'S MAIN PROBLEMS--RULERS ARE ON EXCELLENT TERMS WITH EACH OTHER AND DO A LOT OF FRIENDLY HORsing AROUND AT THEIR MEETINGS,

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BUT THEY HAVE NEVER DEALT CANDIDLY WITH ONE ANOTHER ABOUT MATTERS

THAT REALLY COUNT. NOW, ACCORDING TO TAJIR, RASHID FOR FIRST TIME IS TELLING ZAYID TO HIS FACE THAT HE DOESNT LIKE VARIOUS PROPOSALS, AND WHY.

3. BAD NEWS, IN TAJIR VIEW, IS THAT AS TIME GOES ON THESE TWO KEY RULERS SEEM MORE AND MORE CONFIRMED IN QUITE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE MANAGEMENT OF THEIR RESPECTIVE EMIRATES. TAJIR BELIEVED SITUATION IN ABU DHABI WAS "WORSE THAN EVER." FEDERAL AUTHORITY WAS BEING EXERCISED BY INCOMPETENTS SUCH AS SHAIKHS MUBARAK (INTERIOR) AND SAIF (HEALTH) AND ZAYID WAS NOT PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT WAS GOING ON. CORRUPTION IN ABU DHABI WAS "TERRIBLE" (AN ARRESTING INDICTMENT, COMING FROM THIS EXPERT). IN CONTRAST, TAJIR PRASIED MANNER IN WHICH RASHID, OVER YEARS, HAD DELEGATED ON-GOING GOVERNMENTAL FUNCTIONS TO COMPETENT PEOPLE, LEAVING HIMSELF TIME FOR EFFICIENT CONSIDERATION OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND NEW PROJECTS. BUT TAJIR WWAS ALSO CRITICAL OF RASHID ON SEVERAL COUNTS. HE HAD DONE NOTHING TO PREPARE HIS SONS FOR RULE AND SEEMED TO THINK HE WOULD LIVE FOR EVER. MORE IMPORTANT, IN TAJIR'S EYES, WAS FACT THAT ALTHOUGH RASHID'S INCOME WOULD BE MORE THAN BILLION DOLLARS NEXT YEAR, THERE WAS STILL NO PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FOR REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE IN DUBAI. HE CONSIDERED THIS A POTENTIAL POWDER KEG.

4. I ALSO HAD OPPORTUNITY TO ASK FOREIGN MINISTER SUWAIDI ABOUT APPARENT SIGNS THAT SHAikh SULTAN OF SHARJAH, IN COOPERATION WITH SHAikh ZAYID, WAS ENGAGING HIMSELF MORE ACTIVELY IN FEDERAL AFFAIRS. SUWAIDI SAID HE HOPED SO, BUT WENT ON TO EXPRESS CAUTION ABOUT THESE TWO RULERS ACTING IN MANNER TO LEAVE IMPRESSION THAT THERE

WAS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM.
THIS WOULD IMMEDIATELY
CREATE COUNTER-BLOCS AMONG OTHER RULERS (WE THINK SUWAIDI IS
VERY MUCH ON TARGET HERE).

5. POSSIBILITY OF NEW FEDERAL CABINET, MUCH TALKED ABOUT FROM TIME TO TIME, ALSO SEEMS HUNG UP PENDING SOME KIND OF BASIC COMING-TO-TERMS

BETWEEN ZAYID AND RASHID. SHAikh SULTAN TOLD ME LAST TIME I SAW HIM
THAT
HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO TRY TO GET RID OF INCOMPETRNT
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MINISTERS AND CREATE NEW CABINET BASED ON MERIT. TOO MANY POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES WOULD BE INVOLVED. BETTER TO TRY TO STRENGTHEN EXISING CABINET BY BRINGING STRONG AND QUALIFIED MEN INTO THE DEPUTY MINISTERS POSITIONS. SULTAN SOUNDED AS IF HE HAD GIVEN SOME THOUGHT TO THIS, AND UNDOUBTEDLY HIS VIEWS HAVE BEEN MADE KNOWN TO SHAikh ZAYID.

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